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SUBJECT: RETIRED IRANIAN AMBASSADOR ON US ELECTION, IMPROVING US
IMAGE, AND KHATAMI CANDIDACY

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CLASSIFIED BY: Ramin Asgard, Director, Iran Regional Presence
Office, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[11](#). (S) IRPO Director met on November 6 with Ambassador Gholamali Khoshroo (retired), who was in Dubai applying for a visa to attend the NYU Center for Dialogues Iran Conference in early December. Ambassador Khoshroo's scheduled presentation will address opportunities for US-Iran cooperation. Khosroo's last assignment before his retirement was as Iranian Ambassador to Australia. He has also served in the Iranian Permanent Representatives' Mission to the UN. Meeting just after the US election, Khosroo was cautiously optimistic about possibly improved US-Iran relations, and welcomed the prospect of renewed US influence in the region, with the proviso that it relies less on the use of military force and more on America's "essential" qualities. A senior advisor to former President Khatami, he noted Khatami was under intense pressure to run, and that the new US administration's approach to Iran might have an impact on the viability of Khatami's candidacy. End summary.

[12](#). (S) Speaking immediately after the US presidential election, the discussion began with remarks on the US election. First, Khosroo voiced his congratulations for the democratic ideals the election demonstrated. Khosroo was positive about prospects for improved US-Iran relations in the future, but warned against proceeding too quickly. It was advisable to work gradually and with great transparency given the long period of mistrust. He noted that many Iranians, including the government, remained concerned that at any moment a war could begin - addressing this fear might be a good place to start.

[13](#). (S) Khosroo spoke quite highly of the US, having served there as a diplomat. He had a daughter who was born in the US and a son who had studied and worked there. He recalled that he was in Australia and attended an event to show sympathy after the 9/11 tragedy. At this event he spoke highly of the US and passed along his condolences directly to the US Ambassador. In an additional aside about the US election, Khosroo told IRPOff that in his view, immediate post-election America now enjoys broad global support, much like she did immediately after 9/11.

[14](#). (S) In elaborating on his sense of America's potential to regain its standing in the region, Khosroo was critical of US "unilateralism and force", and suggested that these were not the best tools to spread US influence. Rather, the US could gain international support through relying on its "essential qualities" of freedom, economic opportunity, technological innovation, tolerance and equality. In an effort to personalize

his views, he detailed the recent experiences of his son, who had graduated from law school in Iran, traveled to New York to pursue graduate level law study, passed the NY bar and secured a position with a major NY law firm - all in less than 2 years. Khosroo compared this to his son's likely fate inside Iran, telling IRPOff that "you can not imagine how much would be required to get even a well-qualified, well-connected person like my son a decent job." America had extended this opportunity, he added, "even to a citizen of a country it considers an enemy!"

¶5. (S) Khosroo served as a senior diplomat during Khatami's administration, and remains a close confidante of the former president on foreign policy matters. Khosroo's continuing ties to Khatami are reportedly what led to his dismissal from the Foreign Ministry during Ahmadinejad's presidency. Khosroo noted that during Khatami's administration the MFA had worked to support Khatami's initiatives towards reconciliation with the West, including the US. Pausing to reflect, Khosroo added that "perhaps we moved too quickly then."

¶6. (S) In response to IRPO Director's question on former President Khatami's plans, Khosroo said that Khatami is reluctant to again take on demands of the presidency, but that he is under heavy pressure to run. If he does run, Khosroo predicted, he will again get 70 to 75 percent of the vote. For his own sake, Khosroo said, he would personally prefer Khatami did not run again, as it would mean he and other Khatami allies would have to return to the chaotic world of Iranian politics. Khosroo was somber, but focused throughout the discussion. Based upon his tone and expression, it appeared he clearly envisioned the demands the next election would place on Khatami and his allies, but that he would be willing to answer the call if needed. In conclusion, Khosroo noted, the results of the recent US election might have made Khatami's decision easier.

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¶7. (S) Comment: Khosroo represents a core, found throughout the Iranian government, of senior officials favorably disposed towards the US. This group varies in levels of support for US policies, but most harbor positive feelings towards American culture, technological and academic prowess, and Americans as a people. Many have lived or studied in the US for extended periods, and some even have US citizen children. These figures include, among others, government officials like First Vice President Parviz Davoudi, Former Permrep Javad Zarif, and prominent Freedom Movement leader Ibrahim Yazdi.

¶8. (S) Comment, continued: Khosroo's comments regarding Khatami's potential return to the presidency corroborate the view that the Islamic Republic tends to produce (and the Supreme Leader promote) a President suited to the anticipated challenges and strategic environment Iran will face over the next 5-10 years. The implication, which Khosroo alludes to in his final comment about Khatami's choice being easier under a new US administration, is that a perceived future confrontational international environment will reinforce the Leader's promotion of and popular support for a national security hardliner (viz., a second Ahmadinejad term), whereas the perception of future ditente may set the stage for more moderate Iranian leadership (viz., the return of Khatami).
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